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GENERAL LEBATE

Letter dated 28 September 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As you are aware, Mr. Javier Solana, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, indicated in his statement to the General Assembly on 26 September 1995 in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union that he would shorten his statement in order to speed up the work of the General Assembly.

Accordingly, in my capacity as Representative of the Office of the President of the European Union, I have the honour to transmit to you the complete, authentic text of the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain in English, French and Spanish, and to request that it be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 9.

(Signed) Juan A. YAÑEZ-BARNUEVO

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ANNEX

Statement made by the President of the Council of the European Union and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain to the General Assembly on 26 September 1995

Mr. President,

First of all I should like to convey to you my most cordial and sincere congratulations on your election as President of this Assembly. Both Spain, Portugal's sister country, and the European Union, on behalf of which I have the honour to address this Assembly today, are confident that your work will meet with the greatest success throughout the session that is now starting. I am firmly convinced that your experience as an eminent Professor of International Law and your thorough knowledge of international relations will contribute decisively to achieve the ambitious objectives that lie ahead of us.

I would also like to thank Minister Amara Essy of the Côte D'Ivoire for the excellent manner in which he conducted our deliberations during the previous session.

Likewise, I wish to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General, Dr. Boutros-Ghali, together with my congratulations on his work and his tireless efforts.

Mr. President,

I am addressing this Assembly on behalf of the European Union which has been enlarged to 15 Members States since the beginning of this year, thereby reinforcing its capacity to fulfill its commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In the year of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations, the European Union, which is fully aware of the complexity of the challenges faced by the International Community, wishes to reiterate its full support for our Organization as a universal forum to realise mankind's aspirations for peace and security and economic and social progress.

From this perspective, the European Council, at its meeting held in Cannes on 26 and 27 June, paid tribute to the work of our Organisation in its solemn declaration commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco. Undoubtedly, the outcome of half a century of United Nations activities is impressive.

The United Nations has contributed to the progressive codification and consolidation of international law, to the maintenance of international peace and security in cooperation with the regional organisations, to disarmament, to arms control, to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to decolonisation, to development and humanitarian assistance, to the protection and promotion of human rights, and above all, to cooperation between the nations of the world in the most diverse spheres.

Mr. President,

As the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report on the work of the Organisation, setbacks must not be allowed to overshadow the successes achieved by the United Nations. Through steady and diligent work, our Organisation must make obvious to world public opinion the solid foundations on which its credibility is based. The Members States of the European Union are willing to cooperate in the enhancing of the United Nations' image.

Within a few weeks, the Heads of State and Government of the whole world will solemnly commemorate the Anniversary of the founding of our Organisation, born 50 years ago for the purpose of preserving coming generations from the scourge of war.

Although this occasion will give us an opportunity to appraise the work done by the Organisation over the course of its already long history, we must above all reflect on the best way to prepare the United Nations to meet effectively the challenges facing us at the end of this century. Let me recall, with regard to the present moment of the United Nations, a thought expressed by Jean Monnet in respect of the European Community, when the latter was taking its first steps: "This is only a stage towards the forms of organisation of the world of tomorrow."

Indeed, the disappearance of old rivalries has not meant the end of conflicts. Today we witness ethnic and nationalistic conflicts and humanitarian crises of frightening proportions, the worsening of economic inequalities, contempt for human rights and the systematic violation of the rules of international humanitarian law, genocide, the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the alarming deterioration of the environment. These are some of the most serious problems that we face today. They affect us all, and we all must undertake to solve them.

Mr. President,

Although as usual, issues that are a cause of concern to the European Union are reflected in detail in the memorandum distributed as part of this speech, I would like to highlight some questions that are especially important to us : the situation in the former Yugoslavia, developments in Africa, and the peace process in the Middle East.

Mr. President,

The European Union continues to attach priority importance to reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement for the conflict that ravages the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In this regard, we state our full support for the diplomatic process currently under way and our satisfaction for the first results of this process reached at the meeting that took place in Geneva last September 8.

We consider that the United Nations Forces in the territories of former Yugoslavia have played and continue to play a fundamental role in containing the conflicts, contributing in many cases to stabilizing the situation on the ground and facilitating the negotiation efforts towards peace. Member States of the European Union are among the main troop contributors to this Forces. I want to pay tribute to the United Nations Forces and pay homage to the soldiers that have fallen for peace, many of them citizens of the Union. We firmly believe that the United Nations must continue to play a relevant role in the efforts to achieve peace and to implement the agreements reached.

The European Union has substantially contributed to alleviate the great suffering that the war in the former Yugoslavia, and particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, has inflicted upon the population. I wish to express our firm commitment to continue providing humanitarian assistance, both bilaterally and through the relevant United Nations organisms and agencies.

After more than three years of bloody conflict, the latest developments towards the initiation of a peace process allow us to look forward with greater hope. Within the framework of that peace process, which we hope is near at hand, the European Union, commensurate to its engagement, intends to play an active role in all aspects of the implementation of the peace process, in particular, with regard to its reconstruction. Violence has destroyed human lives, property and the peaceful coexistence among different peoples. Our main task will be, thus, to restore hope and offer decent living conditions to those who still suffer the consequences of this catastrophe.

Mr. President,

The European Union is aware of the great challenges facing Africa. Proof of our concern is that we are working to find peaceful solutions to the conflict in Rwanda and the conflict in Burundi, starting with the more urgent problem of the return of refugees. We fully support the urgent convening of a conference under the auspices of the United Nations, aimed at peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

Likewise, we support the initiatives for social and political reconstruction in countries such as Angola and Mozambique, and welcome the work accomplished by our Organisation in Angola which, following the Lusaka Peace Agreement, has allowed for the establishment of UNAVEM III.

We also favour a more active role of the Organisation for African Unity in the prevention and solution of conflicts in Africa, and we are considering ways of supporting the establishment of effective mechanisms for preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping.

The European Union follows with keen interest the spread of and respect for human rights throughout the continent, and we are very much aware of the situation of dire need of some nations. After the revision of the IV Lomé Convention, the European Union has given particular relevance to humanitarian and food assistance, and we have made an effort to update our development cooperation programmes.

Mr. President,

The European Union has always strongly upheld the peace process in the Middle East, initiated at the 1991 Conference held in Madrid. We warmly welcome the Interim Agreement reached recently by Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, which represents a new and a very important milestone in this process and look forward to the signing of such an Agreement this coming Thursday. Likewise, we are confident that, in the coming months, we will see significant progress in the Syrian and Lebanese negotiation tracks, and that the whole region, which has already suffered enormously, will finally enter in the dynamics of a comprehensive, just and long-lasting peace.

The European Union attaches paramount importance to the work carried out in general by our Organisation in general, and in particular by this Assembly, in favour of peace in the Middle East. One of our objectives in the sessions about to begin is to ensure that the various resolutions adopted by this Assembly on the situation in the Middle East contribute directly to the peace process. Following the guidelines established in previous years, the European Union is determined to continue to work with the interested parties in order to ensure that the text of the resolutions reflect the new realities in the area.

I should also like to remind this Assembly that, in two months' time, Europe will be meeting its Western and Eastern Mediterranean neighbors. The aim of the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Conference is no other than to cooperate in the definition of the future relations between participating States and to guarantee the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean through political dialogue, balanced and lasting economic and social development, the fight against poverty and a more thorough mutual understanding of the different cultures through the enhancement of the human dimension.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude this part of my statement with a reference to the work of the Organisation in Latin America.

Its presence in Nicaragua through ONUCA, ONUVEN and the International Commission for Support and Verification allowed for national reconciliation and the holding of elections.

The mediation between the parties and the work of ONUSAL led to the historic achievement of ending the long and terrible civil conflict in El Salvador, enshrined in the Chapultepec Agreements of January 1992. Today, the presence of MINUSAL, which has the support of the European Union, contributes effectively to overcoming the obstacles that still persist.

In Haiti, the Multinational Force and UNMIH played a fundamental role in the restoration of democracy and in the reconstruction of the country. In Guatemala, the United Nation's role as moderator and the work of MINUGUA have brought about substantive agreements on issues as important as human rights, displaced persons and indigenous populations, which we are confident will lead to a speedy solution to the conflict. The participation of international observers in the coming elections in November, that is supported by the European Union, seems to us an effective formula. All these achievements have been fulfilled with the invaluable help of the various Groups of Friends and the support of the international community.

Mr. President,

Conscious of the universality of the challenges that lie ahead for our Organisation, the European Union attaches great importance to the adoption of measures allowing for the success and proper functioning of the United Nations in implementing the mandates entrusted to it by the Member States.

In this sense, the Organisation's serious financial crisis, unprecedented in its history, seriously endangers the United Nations' capacity for action and is a reason of great concern for the European Union. Our Organisation will become powerless if it does not receive the necessary political support from its Member States and the resources provided by them through the full, punctual and unconditional payment of their financial contributions in accordance with the obligations established by the Charter.

Therefore, the solution of the Organisation's financial crisis is a priority objective for the European Union, which overall is the main contributor, both to the Organisation's regular budget and to the Peacekeeping Operations budgets.

Mr. President,

The European Union considers that the main cause of the United Nations' serious financial crisis is the lack of political will to discharge the financial obligations undertaken by the Member States on signing the United Nations Charter. Aware of their political commitment to the Organisation's objectives, the Member States of the European Union, had paid, at 30 June, over 50% of the total contributions collected for financing, both the regular budget and those for peacekeeping operations.

Additionally, two Member States of the Union - my country, Spain, together with Portugal - were the first to transfer voluntarily from the "C" Group to the "B" Group of contributors to the budgets of Peacekeeping Operations.

This constructive attitude has prevailed in the active participation of the European Union in the High-level Working Group on the financial situation of the United Nations. Our objective is to reach a consensus, as soon as possible, and preferably during this session, on the adoption of specific measures designed to bring about an improvement in the Organisation's financial situation.

The European Union wishes to underline the increasingly urgent need to adopt a global package of measures to solve the United Nations' financial crisis. These measures should contemplate, inter alia, a possible review of the scale of assessments so that it reflects as accurately as possible the principle of the capacity to pay, as well as the establishment of incentives and disincentives to encourage all Member States to comply with their financial obligations in accordance with the Charter.

Mr. President,

The European Union considers that the existence of a solid and viable financial basis is an essential factor with a view to approaching the revitalisation, strengthening and reform of the United Nations. Using this criterion as a guideline, the European Union will participate constructively in the work of the High Level Working Group established by Resolution 49/252, and in the debate on the future of the Organisation which the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations will encourage.

Mr. President,

The Agenda for Development, submitted last year by the Secretary-General, identified the five dimensions of development: peace as the foundation, the economy as the engine of progress, the environment as a basis for sustainability, justice as the pillar of society and democracy as good governance.

The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the completion, before the end of the Assembly now beginning, of a substantial and innovative agenda for development, in which it is made clear that peace cannot be built without at the same time promoting the social and economic progress of the poorest people. Through the decisions taken by the European Council held in Cannes, the European Union has made clear its determination to contribute yet greater financial resources for development aid, within the framework of both the Lomé Convention (in the case of the African, the Caribbean and the Pacific countries) and the financial cooperation with our Mediterranean partners.

Throughout this Assembly we shall pay special attention to the results of the important cycle of major conferences held over the course of recent years under the aegis of the United Nations for discussion of various subjects linked to development and human progress. These conferences have enabled us to advance towards a new global consensus on development and must contribute to strengthening the role of the Organisation in the economic and social fields.

We need the Economic and Social Council to play a more vigorous and more central role within the system; we must ensure that the work of this Assembly and that of the ECOSOC are complementary, avoiding duplications; we must review the priorities and the working methods of the Second and Third Committees; and we must, finally, develop better coordination between the specialised agencies and more constructive relations between the Organisation and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Mr. President,

The results of the Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen will be submitted to this Assembly during the course of the session now beginning. The European Union firmly intends to actively consider these results, with a view to identify appropriate measures that ensure the follow-up and implementation of the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen.

We must not allow the platforms of action adopted at the United Nations Conferences to remain unimplemented. The European Union will lend all its support to ensure that the follow-up and implementation of the platforms for action agreed upon are carried out in a coherent and integrated way. Both this Assembly and the Economic and Social Council must be responsible for monitoring the commitments undertaken, so that these programmes are not reduced -as it has been the case some times in the past - to a mere expression of rules of conduct which do not entail any obligation for the states and international organisations competent in each case.

Mr. President,

The IV World Conference on Women concluded in Beijing only a few days ago. The Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Conference are a step forward, backed by the results of previous United Nations conferences, on the road towards the achievement of equality, development and peace. These objectives were set out in the strategies for the advancement of women adopted in Nairobi ten years ago.

The European Union has worked actively to achieve a consolidation of the results of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in the field of human rights and fundamental liberties of women and on the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, in matters pertaining to sexual and reproductive health. The Platform for Action, adopted as a result of such concern in Beijing, includes important progress in human rights, notably the right of women to control and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, without coercion, discrimination or violence.

The European Union has likewise paid special attention to the provisions contained in the Platform for Action on equal rights in inheritance, definition of responsibilities, parental rights and obligations to provide guidance and support to children in exercising their rights and the relation between cultural and religious influences, and the responsibility of states in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. President,

Only three years ahead of the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the international community cannot yet be entirely satisfied with the progress achieved. This session of the General Assembly will provide us, once again, with an opportunity to take stock of the situation regarding human rights and basic liberties in the world, two years after the important headway made at the Vienna World Conference, the outcome of which reflected the existing consensus on this issue at the turn of the century. The European Union will spare no effort to contribute to the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and its Programme for Action.

In view of the persistence of serious and systematic violations of human rights, the development of machinery for the prevention of and response to these situations becomes a priority task. In addition to the monitoring carried out by the special rapporteurs and the technical assistance provided in this area by our organization, we should explore the need to consolidate and, if necessary, establish appropriate institutions. The best preventive action is based on education. The United Nations decade for education in the sphere of human rights provides us with a special opportunity to make education programmes designed to encourage respect and tolerance available to all, especially children.

In the same context, it is increasingly evident that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms plays a critical role in avoiding potential conflicts. Therefore, we must acknowledge the value of human rights in preventive diplomacy. Some of the serious conflicts which have recently darkened the international scene, particularly in Rwanda, Burundi and in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, are inflicting great suffering on the civilian population, as illustrated by the alarming number of displaced persons and refugees. In this regard, the European Union wishes to reiterate its support for the outstanding work being performed by the UNHCR in this field. At the same time, we are conscious of the harmful effects of ethnic and religious discrimination on the emergence and development of such conflicts and thus reaffirm our conviction of the need

to go further in the adoption of measures to fight racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

Mr. President,

The level of resources assigned by the Organisation to the promotion and protection of human rights -today, merely 1.7% of the Organization's regular budget- continues to be totally inadequate. Increasing these resources significantly would have a positive impact on the activities designed to boost development. Experience has shown that actions performed in the interest of human rights contribute to the greater success of development activities. It is increasingly clear that development, human rights and democracy are interlinked, as stated in the 1986 declaration on the right to development.

Furthermore, the European Union attaches great importance to the role and activities of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and wishes, once again, to draw this Assembly's attention to the pressing need to provide his Office with the human and financial resources required for the proper accomplishment of its tasks. We likewise support the Organization's efforts to enhance the role and functions of the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, under the supervision of the High Commissioner.

Mr. President,

The International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Those Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law committed in the Former Yugoslavia, as well as the International Tribunal for Rwanda are essential factors in the struggle against the impunity of those who violate human rights. The experience of these "ad hoc" tribunals will help the work of the future International Criminal Court, whose draft statute has been drawn up by the International Law Commission and submitted to this Assembly's Sixth Committee during its last session.

The EU has followed closely the work of the "Ad Hoc" Committee for the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, whose recommendations will be taken into consideration by the Assembly now beginning. The European Union is determined to make a constructive contribution to the debate on this matter which, for some time now, has been a priority issue.

Mr. President,

Mankind is facing a growing number of humanitarian emergencies that require an effective response from the international community to enable the tragedy being suffered daily by tens of thousands of human beings to be alleviated. The setting up of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs makes an outstanding contribution to the international efforts of humanitarian assistance, a field in which the often hazardous work of the non-governmental organisations is also of paramount importance. We consider that it is essential to implement the decisions taken this year by ECOSOC on the need to review and reinforce the capacity of the United Nations System in the area of humanitarian assistance.

It is necessary to enhance cooperation between all organisations and people, in such a way that their respective contributions may be mutually complemented and strengthened, duplication of work avoided, and a humanitarian "continuum" ensured.

Mr. President,

We have witnessed important events this year in the field of the environment and in the implementation of the Rio agreements of 1992. Special mention should be made of the positive outcome of the conferences of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the framework Convention on Climate Change, the opening for signature of the Convention to Combat Desertification and the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, under the aegis of the Commission for Sustainable Development.

We welcome these developments and reiterate our will to continue working, within the Organization, towards greater cooperation in the field of the environment.

Mr. President,

The United Nations Charter confers upon the Organization the task of keeping international peace and security as its chief purpose, and entrusts this major responsibility to the Security Council.

The Security Council must continue to be the decision-making centre for issues which affect world security and must adapt to currently-existing situations in order to strengthen the mechanisms stipulated in the Charter.

The Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council has continued its work during the previous sessions of this Assembly, and the members of the European Union participated actively in this work.

Mr. President,

The European Union holds the view that peacekeeping operations and preventive diplomacy missions are, and should continue to be, the focal point of the Security Council's action in favor of world peace and security. We welcome the updating of the "Agenda for Peace" presented by the Secretary-General at the beginning of this year.

I wish to remind this Assembly of the European Union's commitment to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, illustrated by the fact that the Union as a whole is not only the main financial contributor to these operations, providing 37% of the total budget, but also the main provider of personnel. The European Union stands firmly behind this substantial commitment to the peacekeeping endeavours of the Organization. Heavy casualties have been suffered, and it is of utmost importance that every possible step is taken to ensure the safety of the UN-personnel in peacekeeping missions.

Mr. President,

The European Union considers that it is of paramount importance for the Organization to establish its own doctrine on peacekeeping operations. The long and fruitful experience gained by the Organization in the field, and the many theoretical contributions, should provide these operations with a doctrinal base that will facilitate their establishment, implementation and monitoring. Such a doctrine should provide the regional organisations, some of which already perform their duties in this area with great success, with as frame of reference on which to base their peacekeeping initiatives.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations in peacekeeping endeavours should still be explored in order to optimise the use of material and human resources and to put the mandates entrusted to the missions into practice in the quickest, most efficient and successful way.

As an example of the activity of the regional organisations in this field, let me mention that in our continent, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe has already developed a mechanism, still at an embryonic stage, for preventive diplomacy, the establishment of confidence-building measures and the resolution of conflicts. Acting on an EU initiative, the CSCE decided at the Budapest Summit last year to reinforce cooperation with the United Nations and with the Transatlantic Organisations. The States participating in the Summit agreed that, in accordance with the chapter VIII of the Charter, they would make every effort to achieve the peaceful settlement of disputes arising in their territorial areas of action before referring them to the United Nations Security Council.

The European Union furthermore is studying with interest the proposals for stand-by arrangements. To this end, the Union supports the proposals for headquarters of a permanent nature and the U.N. stand-by forces system, and is studying with interest other proposals which also aim at improving the rapid reaction capability of the U.N. with a view to shortening the period for establishing a peace operation and facilitating its subsequent deployment.

Mr. President,

The European Union welcomes the great step forward taken recently within our Organization, on deciding to extend the Non-proliferation Treaty indefinitely. This amounts to fundamental progress in the whole disarmament process and the pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation. The decision adopted, together with the strengthening of the inspection procedure and the principles and objectives of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, constitute an enormous step in the right direction. We also welcome the steady pace of the negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty, that the European Union wishes to be concluded in 1996.

We should now concentrate our efforts on the universalisation of the Non-proliferation Treaty. The European Union invites all states that have not yet done so to become signatories of the NPT. Another European Union priority in the field of nuclear disarmament is the finalisation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and explosives ("Cut-off Treaty"). The European Union regrets that the Conference on Disarmament has not yet been able to set up an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on this issue.

Once again, we appeal to all states that signed the Convention on the Banning of the Development, Production, Storage and Use of Chemical Weapons and their Destruction, to proceed to ratify it so that it may come into force as soon as possible.

Furthermore, the control and limitation of the use of certain conventional weapons is also cause for concern for the European Union. Through its common action, the Union aims to continue to encourage the activities of the United Nations in its fight against the devastating effects of anti-personnel mines in many territories around the world. Also in the field of conventional disarmament, we will pay special attention to the results of the review conference of the 1980 Convention on Inhuman Weapons, in order to render it more effective and to widen its scope.

Mr. President,

We believe in the United Nations. We believe in the universality, binding character and supremacy of international law, which is the result of the development of relations between nations and consensus between peoples.

As expressed in the Declaration of the European Council of Cannes on the Organization's 50th anniversary, the European Union gives its unconditional support to the Organization's ideals and actions.

We are sure that these first fifty years are but the first stage in an unprecedented task that presents no other alternative, given that its chief goal -that of assuring that we all live together in peace, as well as the comprehensive development of human beings- can only be attained through disinterested cooperation between peoples.

Thank you, Mr. President.